

Normans Bay A Fragment



Collated by
Bettina Kulsdom and John Scarboro
2015



Introduction

Because we, the committee members of the Normans Bay Residents' Association, thought 2013 would bring a major change to Normans Bay with plans going ahead to make the railway crossing into a semi-automated road crossing, it seemed a good time to look back on what we knew of the village history. The crossing has now changed and all the work has been done. We have a twenty four hour semi automated crossing in place of the night closures with which we were so familiar.

Residents leave and new ones arrive all the time. There is seldom a time when one of the houses is not receiving building work. These are not uncommon events in any community, but in a small, "end of the line" village whose main street runs out at the beach, they are particularly noticeable. We have, to date, an interesting collection of old photographs, a full set of "newsletters" dating from 1987 and lots of anecdotal stories from long term residents. For each of the families in this small, unique village, Normans Bay has its own image. This is an attempt to bring some of these elements together as a record for the future. It cannot be complete or reflect the view of all residents, but could be of interest to those who want to know more about the past of their community.

When we began this project, D.E. Doswell's publication of 2000, entitled "Normans Bay Camp" seemed to be the only printed record of the village. We learned that Rev. Hutchinson set up a summer camp in the 1920s at what is now the Camping Club Site at the West End of Normans Bay, for the boys of the Shaftesbury Homes and Arethusa training ship. This publication is well worth reading and we do not wish to repeat all that Ted wrote, but in it he says:

"At that time it was only a small village of 30 houses that were snuggled behind a large shingle bank, which protected them from the sea."

It "was closed off by a farm gate at both ends of the village and the cattle were allowed to roam at will. The gate at the West End near what is now the site entrance was called "Grandfather's Gate", after the old retired farmer who used to keep it in good working order. The only traffic using the dirt track road was the local tradesmen from Pevensy, whose speed was restricted to walking pace due to the large potholes, so there was no danger from road traffic".

Susan Corker has added to this story of the Summer Camp with her own story entitled: "Early Visitors to Normans Bay", which appears later in this publication.

It has been an interesting journey through museum archives, stories from villagers, old photographs, newspaper articles and more recently, searching on the internet. You can now Google "Normans Bay" and discover further anecdotes and several publications have appeared during the 2000 decade which mention Normans Bay. I would like to point out that there is NO apostrophe in the name of the Bay, it is not a bay belonging to someone called Norman, nor is it where the Normans landed. Until very recent times it was called The Sluice or Pevensy Sluice. Stories abound as to the origin of the modern name for the village but it became the name of the railway halt.

How to organise the material that we had and where to begin was a difficulty but with the discovery of a Historical Time Line of the area from Bexhill Museum, this seemed a good place to start. It is a general view beginning with Northeye which was a medieval village lying about a mile North of the Star Inn, still shown on Ordnance Survey Maps. You may find idiosyncratic spelling and punctuation in this Time Line, as it has probably been copied many times but it contains some very interesting information. Some repetition of information is also included as we have attempted to use existing material rather than attempt to re-write what had already been written when we began the project.

Enjoy your journey through the past of Normans Bay.

Historical Time Line

1229

In Jeakes custumal of Rye it mentions Northeye as a contributor to the Cinque Ports.

1248

The Abbott of Battle recovered by force of law 20 acres from William- de-Northeye.

1262

William de Northeye (Knight) gave the Chapel of St. James Northeye by deed of endowment to the Bishop of Chichester.

The deed of endowment still exists in the Episcopal Register at Chichester folio (177a) see also SAC XIX Turner.

The Chapel is given in perpetual arms for support of a Chaplain continually to reside and perform divine service in the said Chapel. It was endowed with 20 acres of marshland in the Parish of Hooe called Tenge, 5.5 acres in William de Northeye's new marsh at Bexhill, 3 acres at Bexhill and another 6 acres, 1 acre at Buckholt and rental incomes from 15 tenants amounting to 22s. Per year, also pasture for two cows and ten animals and their progeny and pannage for 6 hogs all under control of William's Herdsmen.

The said Chapel to be illuminated with 3 lbs. of wax candles annually on the feast of St. James and the said chapel shall be provided forever with books, robes, altar and other cloths for performance of divine worship.

1262

A portion of the level at Bestenover (East of Pevensey Haven that was) between Pevensey and Bexhill to be enclosed. William-de-Northeye, Agnes Montacute widow, and others took steps to enclose a lagoon with a sea dyke.

1304 August, a deed of William- de -Northeye refers to a drain through land called Grade

1305

When Luke-de-la-Gare as a commissioner to Pevensey Levels, cast a dam across the Haven at Pevensey to keep the sea out, it locked up the fresh water and caused flooding of the marshes including William-de-Northeye's ground. The lane owners complained to the King. An enquiry required the fresh water impediment to be moved and William-de-Northeye was appointed a commissioner for the levels in 1305 and was still a commissioner in 1523

1340

The Norae rolls say that since 1292 because of floods Hooe lost 400 acres and Wartling 200 acres. In Ninfield a great part of Morhale was under water.

1341

None returns mentions Northeye Chapel.

1401

The Chaplain of Northeye was Thos. Thorpe, admitted on recommendation of Reginald- de-Chobham of St. Hill East Grinstead who had the benefit of the manor of Northeye which was worth £36 per year.

1400

Roberties Messelyn Chaplain and later that year Richard Howlette took the post
No records of Chaplains before 1390.

1402

An enquiry held into the drainage of the whole valley now entirely flooded. A cut was made from Old Haven to Godynshaven DE Plan 2.

1445

A new sewer suggested 8 furlongs (1mile) long, 30ft, wide 6ft, deep at Northeye for £40?
1072 acres of land drowned by fresh water.

1455

A new ditch at Northeye was the extension of the cut DE previously made and is FG on plan 2. This was a large project requiring 28,000 cubic yards to be dug by hand.
It would take 40 men 6 months.

1512

In a roll of accounts amongst Battle Abbey charters in April 1512 and June 1515 The Chaplain of Northeye is represented as having 7 acres of land on the marsh as part of the endowment of the Chapel.
Somewhere between 1509 and 1547 Richard Board held Pevensey, Westham and Northeye.

1580

The Sluice at Normans Bay had taken the place of Pevensey as a port of Lading sometime before this date.

At this date Mr. Stoloyn and Mr. Pelham brought iron down through the new sewers and stored it at Pevensey Bridge for export from the Haven and renewed the use of Pevensey Haven.

1587-8

The mouth of Pevensey Haven forced eastwards most of the water finding its way to the sluice at Normans Bay.

1596

Hastings Corporation decree that Mr. Major, Mr. Edward Pelham and William Fermor shall have commission to survey the waste lands at the sluice within the liberty of Hastings and deal with anyone that shall claim title thereto.

1597

Aug. 28th a dispute about the title of Sluice House (Star Inn) between Hastings Corporation and one John Cooper. The Town represented by Thos. Lake and William Femour, Jurats,

1599

Dispute about a wreck cast ashore in the liberty of Pevensey between Hastings and Pevensey. Hastings claimed the wreck belonged to the Cinque ports as a whole and not to an individual member.

1604

May 14th the profit of the shipping of iron at the sluice is let to Thos. Mannington for this year to be collected and for his pains he shall have the one half of the profits for his own use. Mr. Ross of Hastings who supplied most of this information from the Corporation Records says this appointment was made at the hundreds' court when the officers of the Borough received their appointment.

1607

28th Feb. A distraint on the goods of Thomas Gawen Taylor one sprattle net worth 6d and the goods of Robert Wright Taylor, value 5 shillings for the duties of 4d per ton of iron by ancient decree viz. 21 tonnes laden by Gawen and 16 tonnes laden by Wright at the Sluice within the liberties of Hastings.

The goods were sold on the open market.

March 29th Counsel's opinion sought on the validity of the charge of 4d per ton on iron on Masters of Barques carrying same. Decree to carry on with the charge.

1609

Pevensey Haven's mouth now in the liberty of the sluice.

N.B. This would be at the end of Beachlands, east of what was Grandfather's gate then known as Godynshaven.

1610

Site of Northeye on Speeds map.

1724

Site of Northeye on Budgeons map.

1725

The following information was given by Mrs. Rose Foord whose maiden name was Lingham and whose ancestors had the Sluice House, now the Star Inn. The Sluice House was licensed by the Hundreds Court of Hastings annually from before 1725 to 1808 first to Henry Lingham and next to Joseph Lingham. There was another Henry Lingham who in 1801 married at Hollington, Hastings, Elizabeth Starr and it appears as a consequence or coincidence that about this time Sluice House changed its name to the Star Inn. In 1761 the Inn known as Sluice House was advertised to let and inquiries to be made of J. Lingham, the Priory, Hastings. It seems however it was retained in the family.

1739

Gants report on survey of this period up to 1740 when he surveyed the liberty of the sluice and produced an excellent map by order of the Hastings Corporation. He said the mouth of the Haven which was opened in 1739 was now choked up with beach and the Haven water was unable to escape.

A new cut was therefore made at a cost of £1,000 going along the sea coast a distance of 440 rods. (1.3 Miles) 1 feel this cut was the New last Stream going along towards Cooden.

1805

The sluice was a notorious haunt of smugglers and in 1805 a Revenue cutter from Newhaven caught a boat there and captured its crew and 540 casks of brandy and the following January 500 parcels of tea were taken from a lugger off shore.

1831

Coast blockade abolished and Coastguards under control of the Customs set up.

1833

Last bloody battle at Pevensey Sluice between Smugglers, Excise officers and Dragoons. Sussex Weekly Advertiser Nov. 1833

1843

On the map of this date are shown the Towers 52, 53, 54 and 55 within the liberty of the Sluice. The high tide line is shown as passing through the middle of No. 53 and right up to 54 and 55. In fact Tower 55, the Telegraph Tower, is in the same proximity to the sea now as it was 140 years ago.

The Star Inn and the two Looker's cottages are close by and the Commissioners House between the sluices and Beach House,

The Cottages near Sunshine Cafe are there but the Coastguards have not yet appeared and this is before the railway was built.

1853

According to L.J. Bailey, Wesleyan Mission formed at Normans Bay.

1855

Rueben Knight has the Star Inn.

1856

The Admiralty took over control of the Coastguards

1857

Mr. Ross, A Jurat from the Hasting's Corporation visited Old Town Field and, it being a dry year, could trace the pattern of the streets. In enquiry of a very old lady whose father went back 125 years previous, that is 1732, he had told her it was used as a quarry for brick and stone by the farmer of the area. Mr. Ross also reported evidence of buildings in Chapel Field and made a sketch of the remains of Northeye Chapel and by 1859 on a return visit this had disappeared. These were flint walls 8ft. high, 1ft 6in thick and 20ft. long, see sketch.

Mr. Pilbeam, a looker, said as a boy he had helped a gang of workmen to demolish the ruins and spread it on the roads, in a statement made in 1906 to E.E. Evans, Vicar Pevensey.

1864

Dispute between liberty of the Sluice and Hastings in which Hastings claimed possession of a whale that was washed ashore at the mouth of the Sluice. See Cants Map, letter A. Railway opened Halt.

Northeye enjoyed privileges of Cinque ports except Wreckage, flotsam and Jetsam.

John Hilton had Star Inn at this time.

1866

The Coastguard station comprised ten cottages, 1 Officer's House, Boat House, Rocket House on a site of 2 acres sold in 1926.

Church of St. James built at Normans Bay chiefly to serve the Coastguards and under special dispensation used as a School also.

1878

George Wood has Star Inn.

1881

The population of the Sluice is 119 and area 840 acres.

1886

Mission opened at Normans Bay according to Bexhill Chronicle

1887

William Wedge has the Star Inn

The School at St. James was for 50 children and was for Infants. The average attendance was 38 and the mistress was Miss Rachel Burchett.

1892

Act made to give Coastguards Telephone and Telegraph in this year. The Martello Tower (55) still standing was known as The Telegraph Tower.

1896

John Hilton has Star Inn.

1901

Pikes Directory of Hastings, St. Leonards, Bexhill and Pevensey Sluice

St. James Church, Pevensey Sluice in connection with St. Marks, Services Sundays 6p.m. Holy Communion last Sunday in the month at 8 a.m. Rev Prebendary J. Harvey Simpson and Capt, Jas. Fowler (Church Army)

Pevensey Sluice Scattered Houses

Star inn, John Wedge, James Elphick.

Rock House Bank, Mr. & Mrs. A. Ticehurst, George Welch

F.G.H. Pierce, John Winter, James Morton, Miss White.

Havens Mouth, level crossing gatemen Samuel Funnell,

Henry Wood. Level crossing, W Glazebrook.

Coastguard Station, Watson, Chief Officer Tel (3)

William Peachey, Chief Boatman, W.A. Wells, William Vivian,

W Rollison, Fred Chase, Thos Robinson, Wm. Mitchell,

J. Dawson, A. Stevens.

1905

Pikes Directory

Pevensey Sluice Scattered Houses

Mr and Mrs Thos. Farrell, "Pevensey Sluice.
 J. Smith, Star inn, Edmund Elphick,
 Mr. & Mrs. A. Ticehurst, Rock House Bank
 George Welch, F.G.H. Pierce, James Morton, Mrs. Kimber.
 Havens Mouth, level crossing gatesman, George Stevens,
 Henry Wood, George Shoesmith, Edwin Stevenson, George Wedge,
 Level Crossing, Glazebrook.
 St. James 'Church National School,
 Coastguard Station W.H. Thomas, Chief Officer, Tel 3
 J. Williams, Chief Boatman, Stephen Row, William Dean,
 E.G. Chamberlain, R Davey, G Garbutt, C Hewett, M. Mitchell, A. Robinson.
 Note Pevensey Sluice is missed out of the 1915 directory.
 George Pilbeam a looker lived at ^allsend said in this year

1906

George Pilbeam a looker lived at Wallsend said in this year that when he was a boy he assisted a gang of men to demolish and throw upon the roads the ragged upstanding walls of Northeye Chapel. (This would have been in 1858).

1915

St. James was a mixed School for 35 children and the mistress was Mrs. Kimber

1930

Kelly's Directory,
 The Sluice, Normans Bay,
 Motor Car Halt.
 Ed. Stevenson, Normans Bay, Halt Cottage.
 W Westgate, Signalmans Cottage.
 G. Field, Sea Breeze, John Smith, Star Inn, St. James School,
 St. James Chapel. Miss Osbourne Officers House.
Coastguards Cotts.
 2. A. Kmery, 3. Wm. Jenner, 4. P. Bryant, 5. A. Elphick, 6. Mrs. Elphick,
 7. W Elphick, 8. P. Freeman 9. Wm. Luffman, 10. Wm. Cane. A.C. Mullen
 Tower House. Mrs. Evans The Cottage, William Brit, Wm. Froud, Wm. Rigglesforde,
 G.T. Durrant, Mrs. Fairbeard, Ticehurst of Rock House Bank,
 Railway Cottage. Stevens, Butler, G E. Flanagan, Wm. Coppard,
 Baldwin, Shopkeeper, Sunshine Bungalow Fred Cornford
 Chapel View. Wm. Cave, Martello Tower R. Morton, Igloo Ed. Dodswell,
 The Perch A. Miller, Answer Mrs. Newland, Idano.

From Volume 21 of the Sussex County Magazine 1949

1864 Normans Bay, then Pevensey Sluice was greatly publicised in this year because a whale was washed up on the beach at the sluice mouth. The only building was the Star Inn previously Sluice House and two lookers' cottages close by. Sluice House went back before 1597 at which time there was a dispute about its ownership, recorded previously. It used to be manned by the men of the Commissioners of Pevensey Levels to regulate the sluice gates.

Mr. Smith Licensee of the Star Inn operated the gates for the Commissioners prior to 1949.

An old map dated 1455 shows Sluice House and two lookers cottages now in ruins but occupied in recent years by lookers. 1607 the river was navigable for small craft and a settlement sprang up around Sluice House. In this year there was a dispute between Hastings Corporation and the villagers because of the duty imposed on the export of iron from The Sluice.

Not long after this the sluice lost its only form of Trade and with it went the few inhabitants and it was a name only until 1864 when a huge whale was deposited on the beach. There are pictures still about showing 30 men standing on the whale.

Thousands flocked down to see such a sight. The Sluice had greatness thrust upon it. The Railway ran special trains from London and as there was no station they threw up a platform to allow people to alight and this eventually became Normans Bay Halt.

Some years before the whale a shepherd named John Hilton had bought the Star Inn with his savings. The train loads of Londoners soon drank him dry and he had to put shutters up to repel the visitors.

In the mean time Hastings Corporation claimed the whale which by now was beginning to smell. The claim being made because Northeye was a limb of the Cinque Port of Hastings and did not have the right of flotsam and jetsam. By this time at the Sluice people were heartily sick of the whale and gladly invited Hastings to come and get it. It was cut up on the beach and carted to Hastings fish market in tip carts. There is no record of what happened to it then but it is believed a lot of it was taken to sea and dumped.

During John. Hilton's tenancy, the sea one night overflowed the ridge and flooded the settlement. Water around the Star Inn was 4ft, deep and John and his family and livestock lived in the bedrooms upstairs for some days 'before the flood subsided.

In the bar parlour of the Inn marks can be seen recording the height of the water.

Eventually the name of Sluice was considered as too undignified by the new inhabitants and they called it Normans Bay. It was the event in 1864 and the ready made Inn which brought people down to the area.

According to information supplied by Bexhill Museum Society, Northeye Chapel's map Ref is:

TQ60 6823 0709 which is 337deg true from the Star Inn 1133yds and 200yds from Chapel Bridge 250deg true

And that is the last entry on the time line which we believe originated from Bexhill Museum.

There follows a collection of extant documents in the village archives. Origins are not known.

Normans Bay – Data and History

The word Normans as in Normans Bay comes from the old French word Normand – a dweller in the North of France/Gaul, hence the name of Normandy and the Norman people.

Other places which circle the village of Normans Bay also have ancient names such as Hooe, which means a spur of land. In 1086 it was spelt Hov, in 1280 – Ho, in 1535 – Hoo, a ridge of ground above marshland. Langney means long island, Westham – west water meadow, spelt Westhamme in 1252, and Wallers Haven, once a small stream connected with John Wallere in 1327 and was recorded as Wallershave in 1455.

To go back in history to when some of the first records of the area start to appear, according to the first Roman records, they enclosed 10 acres of what had been an early British stronghold, the site of the future Normans Bay was not in existence. The marshes free flooded through the few shingle banks found in the bay. Locals who fished or collected salt, hunted water fowl and would retreat to the few islands found in the bay at high water. The sea would lap against the great castle walls, now called by the Romans, Anderida, one of a chain of twelve forts designed to protect the Saxon shore against invasion.

After the Romans departure, Anderida was reoccupied by the British until 490 AD, when Ella, a Saxon chieftain from the west and his son, Cissa, founder of Chichester, successfully attacked the fort during their eight year campaign to conquer the area between Chichester and Pevensey.

The Saxons in turn were driven out by the Normans in 1066 and the land at Pevensey given by William I to his half-brother Earl Robert of Mortain, who built a new castle within the Roman Walls and made Pevensey the capital of Rape, or county division recorded in 1302 as "rape of Pevensese Mortayn".

Even before the Normans, Pevensey was a busy port for travel and trade with France and for ships to shelter in the coastal trade.

Northeye – A Lost Town



The name of Normans Bay was adopted when the railway opened a Halt of that name there in 1905. The sluice cannot be separated from Northeye whose chapel was on an eye (a high piece of ground) in Chapel field as shown in Cants Map. (Fig 1.) So the story must start with Northeye the town of which was considerable and which was situated at the foot of rising ground in Town *Field* as shown on Cants Map. Northeye does not seem to be mentioned in the Domesday Book.

One of the few islands in the marshlands was called Northeye and the mound for this medieval town can still be found on the footpath from the Star Inn at Normans Bay to the Lamb Inn on the A259 (clearly marked on a modern Ordnance Survey map as “site of medieval town”). This sloping field, known as the Old Town Field, shows irregular grassy hummocks which may be due to walls or early excavationsites.

It was originally the northerly of four islands lying in the salt marsh of Pevensey Haven. This area, which became part of the Hooe level, was one of the first parts of the marsh to be drained.

The port was a sub port to Hastings and under the jurisdiction of the Cinque ports system. Unfortunately all records in connection with this have been lost. However, it is mentioned in estate records and the Battle Abbey records, as early as the 12th century.

These records mainly deal with the marsh drainage system, such as

“1241 AD – James de Northeye is granted permission by Battle Abbey to drainScuttesmarsh by means of Babbingfleet and Swanefleet.”

They also record gifts of land to Battle Abbey, such as:

“1262 AD – William de Northeye grants 20 acres of marshland at a place called Tunge to Northeye Chape”.

This probably represents the foundation of the chapel which once stood in Chapel Field, the remains of which could still be seen last century.

The town seems to have prospered during the 12th century but during the next century suffered several disasters. In 1258 the town was seized from William de Northeye for siding against the King during the Baron’s War. Nature struck in 1287 when a great storm swamped the sea defences and flooded the marsh, destroying crops and livestock. To prevent this happening again a Royal commission was set up to reorganize the drainage of Pevensey Levels.

For the next fifty years, large areas of land were reclaimed until a second storm caused flooding in 1331. Again there was a reorganisation of the drainage system with a new main drain called Wallers Haven and a sluice at the Star Inn was constructed. This marked the downfall of the port of Northeye as its haven became silted up and only navigable by small vessels. Trade continued in dribs and drabs up until the 17th century when iron was still being transported from the port, but by then what remained of the town’s residents were forming a new hamlet on the beach at Pevensey Sluice (now Normans Bay).

During 2013/14 some members of the Wealden U3A set out to visit and research three lost East Sussex villages including Northeye. Roger Lee gave us permission to reproduce here the poem he wrote to record this work.

Northeye's disappearance
By
Roger Lee of Wealden U3A

Tie up the laces of the walking boots,
The search is on for historical roots.
We're scouring the Levels looking for signs,
Tracing fields and meadows for contoured lines.

The place? Northeye, from the Saxon era;
Five miles past Eastbourne or maybe nearer.
A noted island in Pevensey Bay,
It supported the Cinque Ports of the day.

In the shallows lay, deposits of salt,
Dug out by the men from the watery vault.
Boiled and crystallized, it was bagged for trade
To preserve their foodstuffs – a vital aid.

Fierce storms blew in around 1253.
They battered the coastline relentlessly.
The beds of salt were badly affected;
Embankments filled – production neglected.

The local economy never revived,
Placing more hardship on those who survived.
When the plague followed on with more lives lost,
Homes were abandoned at a brutal cost.

Over time the inlet began to silt
Mother Nature's forces struck to the hilt.
Years of tidal floods and reclamation,
Have seen the landscape change its formation.

Now all that remains is a telling mound,
And marked indentations upon the ground.
Where men and women once lay down to sleep,
Today luscious pastures are home to sheep.

Reproduced with Roger's permission.

I have subsequently visited Bexhill Museum in 2015 and found newspaper articles by L.P Bartley writing in the Bexhill Observer under the heading of "Little Common History". These articles contain more information about Northeye and two excavations made of the village. I recommend to any reader who would like to delve further into the history, that they visit the museum and read through some of the archive material produced by them.

The existing link between Northeye and Normans Bay is in the name of the chapel appearing in the next chapter. A chapel was originally built in Northeye and a sketch of the ruins of this was made in 1857 by a Mr. Ross of Hastings and is reproduced here at the beginning of this chapter.

St James Church

Built in 1866 at a cost of £176 by Canon Simpson on land given by the Duke of Devonshire. It was used as a school for the children of local fishermen and only used as a church on Sundays. It was about 15 feet by 35 feet. In 1879 an apse was added at a cost of £70. It was closed on 18th September, 1967. The land and church were auctioned in 1968 and bought by Mr. Alf Budgen. It was demolished in 1979. (Source of this information Sussex Bells and Belfries by G.P. Elphick – Daphne's file).

Since 1979 St. James' cottages, numbers 1 to 4, have been built creating the third set of cottage numbers at the East end of the village: Seaview, one to three, Coastguard, one to ten and St. James, 1 to 4. At the West end of the village are Bay cottages, one to five, creating mayhem for a new postman.

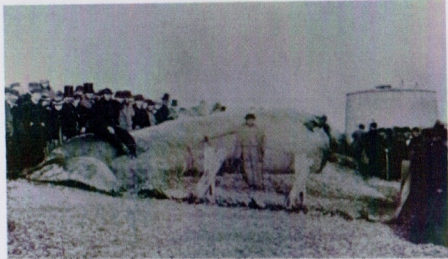




Note in this photograph of St. James Chapel the Victorian post box in the bottom right corner. This is still in position between No. 4 St. James Cottages and Sunnyside. The cross on the East side of the roof is now in Bexhill Museum.

The story of the Whale

At 8pm on Monday 13th November 1865, William Richards, the Coastguardsman at nearby Pevensey Sluice spotted what appeared to be the upturned hull of a ship off the coast. He alerted Mr Bussell, the chief-officer of the watch and the two men watched as it headed towards the beach under a strong south-westerly wind. It was not a boat it was a whale - a huge Finback whale over 70 feet long and weighing more than 50 tons.



Whales were, at this time, hunted for their blubber which was a source of whale-oil which was used for lamps, margarine and soap. A huge whale was very valuable indeed and the following day the Mayor of Hastings, Alderman Ross, attended the scene with his Town Crier, Mr Cox. The carcass of the animal was claimed by the Town of Hastings under the Cinque Ports Charter but there was a counter claim by the local Customs-House on behalf of the Board of Trade. It was agreed that an auction should be held and this was conducted by Mr Groome the Collector of Customs at Rye. Bidding started at £15 and the animal was eventually sold to a group of ten local fishermen led by a Mr Mark Breach for £38.

Anxious to make the most of their unusual purchase, the fishermen erected a canvas screen around the scene and charged sixpence for a guided tour. On the Wednesday, hundreds of sightseers descended on the bay and within two days the fishermen had made back their money. People travelled by train to either Bexhill or Pevensey Stations to walk along to Normans Bay. Such was the demand that special excursion trains were laid on and in order to assist the crowds a temporary station was quickly built of old sleepers and timber. Thirsty tourists went to the nearby Star Inn and on one occasion the pub ran dry and it is said that the landlord had to barricade himself and his family in an upstairs room to protect them from disappointed customers.

Thousands of people visited the dead whale despite its offensive smell. The fishermen tour guides seemed to know their stuff; one, pointing out the huge mouth said "despite his huge mouth, he eats nothing larger than a sprat". I am sure William Flower would have been impressed. He visited from the Royal College of Surgeons and later contacted Cambridge University suggesting that the skeleton could assist biology students. It is estimated that over 40,000 people travelled to Norman's Bay that winter to view the creature.

The owners of the whale made a cute investment and probably made back their money many times over. The carcass was carefully stripped, not only to secure the precious whale-oil but also to preserve the skeleton. This was done under the guidance of Mr Flower. The skeleton of this once beautiful creature is now on display at the Museum of Zoology at Cambridge where it is still a popular attraction. It hangs above the main entrance and is illuminated at night.

And what has Normans Bay to show for all this excitement? Well a railway station. The sleepers and timbers which were hastily erected to make a temporary station became a permanent station now known as Normans Bay Halt.

Written by Kevin Gordon and reproduced with the kind permission of Sussex Express.

At some stage, before being taken to Cambridge University, the skeleton was transferred to Hastings Central Cricket Ground. Here it was displayed over the Easter of 1866 with the Local fishermen making more money by charging visitors to view. Below is a copy of a poster advertising the event.

GREAT ATTRACTION

FOR THE

EASTER HOLIDAYS.

THE SKELETON

OF THE

Monster Whale,

RECENTLY STRANDED AT PEVENSEY,

Measuring about 70 feet in Length,

WILL BE EXHIBITED

IN THE

CENTRAL CRICKET GROUND,

HASTINGS,

DURING EASTER WEEK.

The Proprietors, desirous of affording all classes an opportunity of seeing this wonderful and interesting object, have decided upon admitting the public at the following extremely moderate price, viz:

Daily from 11 till 1, and from 2 till 5.

SIX-PENCE EACH. Children, Half-price.

EVENINGS, from Six till Eight, 4d; Children, 2d.

**OBSERVE!—THREE EXHIBITIONS DAILY, FOR A SHORT TIME,
PREVIOUS TO ITS REMOVAL FROM HASTINGS.**

LEWES:

FARNCOombe & BATES, PRINTERS, EAST SUSSEX NEWS OFFICE

1866

The Railway



In 1845 the Brighton, Lewes and Hastings Railway Company obtained permission to construct a line from Brighton to Ashford via Hastings. This opened in 1846. The line passed through Pevensey Sluice but there was no halt there. The halt was finally officially opened on 11th September, 1905 as a motor train stop. These trains were replaced by separate engines and carriages in 1912.

The above photograph shows an early view of Normans Bay Halt when the Railway cottage was still on the North side of the railway. The Coastguard Cottages are clearly in sight on the South side of the railway line and there is no evidence of the caravan park.

When the whale washed ashore in 1865, sleepers were hastily laid so that visitors could alight from the trains to see the whale.

trains stop once every hour in each direction and this is the only public transport for the village. Trains do not stop on Sundays or late in the evenings.

Reading through some of the old village Newsletters, it would appear that at different times the villagers have asked for the gates to be automated, for trains to continue to stop once every hour when the timetable changed to once every two hours, and more recently, for the gates to be kept as they are because the proposed automation will almost certainly create a very dangerous crossing.

As I write they have been semi automated and are open twenty four hours a day..

Smuggling

As a resident in one of the ten Coastguard Cottages built to house the coastguards in the middle of the nineteenth century, I find myself wondering what life was like then and what has been the history of the cottages since they were built.

A search through the documents that I inherited when I bought the cottage revealed a copy of a letter from; The Land Company, 68 Cheapside, E.C. dated 3rd October, 1910 but this refers to 65 plots "of very liberal size" which are available for sale at prices ranging from £30 to £60." Interesting, but not the Coastguard Cottages.

The first evidence I found for the sale of my cottage is dated 9th February, 1927 when George Sargent, William Elphick, James Hilton and William Courteney bought the Cottages and Watch House from the War Department and the Admiralty.

In the Abstract of the Title the parcel of land is known as Pevensey Coastguard Station.

The complete parcel of land and buildings were gradually split until on 19th May, 1958, after the military had occupied the whole village during the second World War, No. 5 was sold by Mr. J. C. C. Smith to Mr and Mrs F. Clark and then 21st January, 1980 it was transferred to Mr. and Mrs. J. Adderley.

And I bought it from the estate of Mrs. J. Adderley in December, 2006.

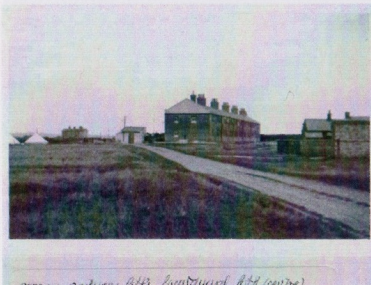
I am sure that the walls of this cottage could tell many stories, if we only had access, but I only have the documentation.

So back to coastguards and smugglers. Mary Waugh writes in her Introduction to her book entitled "Smuggling", published in 1985, that in Kent and Sussex during the eighteenth century "large gangs terrorised the countryside, at times resorting to blackmail, extortion and murder to maintain control."

She explains that this "was a significant episode in our social history" and Normans Bay, or Pevensey Sluice or The Sluice as it was known then, had its place in that history.

A visit to the Star Inn on Sluice Lane at Normans Bay puts you right in the centre of much of the smuggling history of this stretch of coast. In 1822 it was the site of a battle between gangs.

Much has been written about smuggling in Sussex and Kent and a visit to the Court House in Pevensey is a must for the lover of stories.



Coastguard cottages taken from photo Archives with no dates available.



LEFT TO RIGHT, CHURCH OF ST. JAMES, FROM WINDS...

The Star Inn in 2013



The Star Inn was formerly a sluice house and became an inn in the 16th century. It was a centre for smuggling gangs until the coastguard station was built in the nineteenth century. James Donne, formerly editor of the Sussex County Magazine, wrote a history of the Inn, and here is a selection of quotations from this history.

“The Star Inn is as old as the river which flows by the pleasant garden, and that is over 500 years old. Both were born together in the year 1402 and have never been separated”

He explains that at the time of the Norman Conquest the Pevensey Marsh was an inland sea containing many “eyes”

including Langley, Pevensey, Horse Eye, Rickney, Chilley and Northeye. Drainage of the marshes was commenced and one of the earliest records dated 1180, states that a “new marsh has been created.

A sea wall was constructed from what is now Cooden to Pevensey but this was breached in 1287 and the sea flooded the land again. It was realised that Pevensey was the cause of the problem as all the rivers of the area drained into the sea there. In 1396 the “Commissioners of the sewers of Sussex” created a new cut, but this was only a temporary solution and finally the River Ashburn was diverted at Pevensey to what is now Normans Bay “through the lands of Steven Waller of Hooe” and thus the river at Normans Bay became Wallers Haven. This was completed in 1402. The Sluice House was built to house the men who controlled the flood gates. This became The Star Inn and “the earliest documentary evidence of the Star Inn is contained in a deed in the possession of the Hastings Corporatin dated 1597”.

Two lookersers cottages were built on the other side of the river to the Star Inn in Tudor times and these were still in existence in 1963 when James Donne was writing his article.

Aghios Georgios II

May 1963

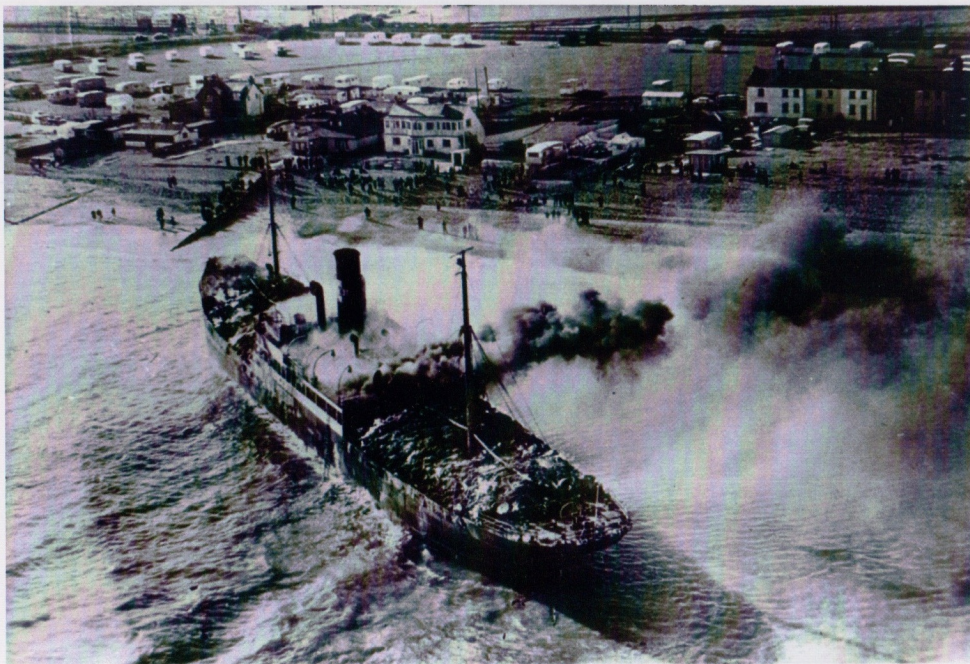
In May, 1963, the Lebanese registered ship Aghios Georgios II, carrying a cargo of esparto grass, ran aground at Normans Bay. She was first sighted rounding Beachy Head belching black smoke. This aerial photograph shows the Normans Bay Caravan Park top left and the Coastguard Cottages top right.

According to a newspaper report in the Bexhill-on-Sea Observer, dated Saturday, June 19, 1982, and entitled "Night of the Inferno", it brought crowds "in their thousands" by train, car and walking.

Further viewing of this event can be found on the internet in a British Pathe video which is available for preview or to purchase. This shows the crowds on the beach and firemen attempting to put out the fire.

Daphne Chesson, a local resident, born in Normans Bay and whose story appears elsewhere in this record, says that the ship finally came to rest right outside her gate. Four holes were cut into the hull of the ship to stabilize it as the tide came in and when the tide went out again, the cargo of esparto grass smelled badly. She remembers the local roads were jammed with cars as they stopped to watch the blaze. The firemen stayed overnight in her caravan.

She also recollected that when the ss. Barn Hill was sunk in 1940 off Beachy Head, she and her future husband were on the beach and saw the bomb go down the funnel.



Sunshine, Seaview Cottages and Alice's shop



These two postcards show Seaview Cottages, Alice's Shop and Sunshine in their heyday. In 2012, when Sunshine had fallen into decay, it was sold at auction. The Village Stores' half of the building was demolished, but the hotel on the right was completely rebuilt, but still in the style of the original building.



Alice's shop is mentioned by many people when talking about Normans Bay. It is now still recognisable as part of No.1 Seaview Cottages.

The following article appeared in The Daily Mail and also on the internet. Links have been shown.

Alice's wonderland (1957)

Anthony Clark, 61, retired fire officer, Surrey

Our annual family holiday, by popular consent, was in a caravan park at Normans Bay, Pevensey, in Sussex.

In this picture, from 1957, are my mother and father, my younger sister Vivian and Alice, who ran the shop on the site. (I took the photograph - not bad for an eight-year-old.)



Anthony Clark took this photo of his mother and father, his younger sister Vivian and Alice who ran the shop

Alice's Little Shop (which had started out selling cigarettes to local railwaymen) sold just about everything you could want during a week's summer holiday: paraffin, sticks of rock, shrimping nets, bread and milk.

I don't know how she managed to cram it all in that tiny building! It was like Ronnie Barker's shop in Open All Hours. They don't make them like that now.

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1298239/Sun-sand-Muffin-Mule-Family-snaps-recapture-innocent-magic-holidays-different-age.html#ixzz2ZUhJbZ1>

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Personal narratives from residents of Normans Bay

Carl Fitzsimon's story

Carl Fitzsimon lives at Lorelei in the West end of the village with his wife Cathy and their 3 children. Carl was brought up in Coventry and his parents moved to Bexhill in 1979 where he completed his education at Bexhill High School.

The family moved to Normans Bay in 1980, living in a mobile home next to the Star.

Carl bought the plot, on which he now lives, with a friend in 1988.

In 1990 he married Cathy and bought his friends share and Cathy moved in.

At the time he was a builder and remembers the constant changes in buildings and their ownership.

"The square house at the end of this side of the road was inspired by the Ideal Home Show of the time," he says.

More houses were being built including the three houses next to Puffins.

Puffins was built in 1990 and in the storm of 1999, when the sea ran over the top of the beach ridge, it was one of the unfortunate houses to be flooded.

In the early days there was no real road, only pebbles and there was a trench along the side to prevent the road from flooding.

The large holes in the road caused many a lost exhaust pipe, he recalls.

Carl comments on the increased traffic since the road has been upgraded to tarmac and projects that it will be even worse if and when the rail crossing is automated.

He also points out that the "concrete road" is unlikely to support emergency vehicles and is concerned about the future safety of the village.

Carl remembers a friend of his, Nigel Sinclair, who used to live in Sunnyside at the east end of the village and only paid £11 per week rent. This price was the same when he moved out some 25 years later in 1990!!!!!!

Nigel was Carl's best man when he married Cathy in the same year.

The changing value of property was again referred to when Carl said he bought his own plot for £38,000 in 1986.

He remembers the church being demolished and St James Cottages being built.

There was a sailing club directly across the road from Carl's house and when it was sold he was asked if he would clear it out which he was happy to do.

One of the items he had to remove was an old Datsun Sunny which, after fitting a new battery, started, and he used it for the next two years.

The sailing school was then demolished and five houses were built and are now known as Bay Cottages.

Carl remembers No 5 Bay Cottages being the subject of a "raid" by Customs officials. The house was seized by Customs and bought by Ray Mead who sold it to the current owner, Cliff Reece.

The Star pub was the village "meeting place" with its history of smuggling always being of interest. It was more of a "local" back then.

He remembers, when he first bought the house with his friend, they used to drive to the south side of the crossing, walk across and pick up a second car to drive to The Star. They would get "smashed" and reverse the process to get home. (not a recommended method of visiting a pub today).

He has thought of selling up and moving away but somehow never quite gets round to it. That is the draw of Normans Bay.....

Memories of Norman Everard

written from his home in Spain to his brother in Pevensey Bay

"We have thought for sometime now, on and off, about camping days at Normans Bay. It is more than sixty years ago now and I am struggling to remember anything of interest.

We camped in a small field alongside the only unmade narrow lane opposite the village pump. We used to wonder how the water tasted so fresh, yet so close to the sea. One side of the field abutted the metalled road leading from your neck of the woods to Normans Bay Halt station. We enjoyed minimal facilities. On leaving the field we passed a row of coastguard cottages which led to the beach. Guides and Brownies slept in the first floor bedrooms, lucky things. Lilos had yet to be invented.

There were two camping type shops close to the telephone kiosk. One, a little larger than the other, included a café and B & B. This had a raised, rain supplied water tank on its roof. There was, of course, no mains supply in those days. Here, the unmade lane ended, and pressed hard surfaces of stones led to a few scattered, detached properties, sporting rowing boars, lobster pots, fishing nets and tarred corks. There was no vehicular access to Cooden Beach from here; only a pathway through the pebbles. One retraced one's steps, past Normans Bay Halt station, manually operated level crossing to the "Star Inn". Entering its front door and turning left was the front living room. We, under-aged, and thus very well behaved, dressed in knee length khaki shorts, entered right to the little bar ordering our halves of mild and bitter. It had a sweet, colourful garden, with a stream leading to the sea.

We likened Normans Bay to the "World's End". It seemed so remote from your pebble ridge. You even had a proper pub and a few shops."

Written in retirement from Spain by Norman Everard

Memories

Handwritten transcript from Daphne's folder

Written by a former villager – aged 92 in year 1978 approximately. Name unknown.

My first memories of Normans Bay go back to when I was a very young child and heard my grandfather and grandmother talking of their life there.

My grandfather was Chief Officer of Coastguards at that time and lived in what was then called the White House. There is – or was – a square room upstairs which was then papered with a dark red wallpaper – imagine it – no windows and a dark red paper. However my grandmother valued it as a place to hide from thunder and lightning which terrified her. I always heard Normans Bay spoken of as "The Sluice". My mother was born at Stranraer in Scotland and, together with one of her brothers was baptized at Portpatrick nearby. When my grandfather was transferred south, my mother was received into the Church of England, and as you will see from the certificate enclosed, the church was named as "The Church at the Sluice". I suppose it never had its own vicar, always a visiting one from Bexhill.

They were happy days the family spent and my grandfather was retired from there and went to live at St. John's Wood – what a contrast.

The next link was when an aunt of mine married and spent her honeymoon at the house on the level crossing and a holiday there many times afterwards, Mr and Mrs Edwin Stevenson becoming valued friends and when I was old enough, I used to go with my aunt and uncle, Mr and Mrs Hallingdale, for holidays too. We were there on holiday when the First World War was declared and had to curtail our stay and return to Croydon. Later when my mother was ill, I came to Normans Bay to stay with Mr and Mrs Stevenson and to attend school.

I remember the school desks folded back and made the backs of the pews for Sunday services and wooden folding doors shut off the altar during school days. We were taught by a Miss Kimber – a wonderful woman who, I realized when I got older, taught us how to learn, sure the most important lesson! She lived in one of the houses nearby and had an upright piano in her sitting room and had a dish of sweets on top of it. On Friday afternoons, those among us who deserved such favour were asked to go up with her to take two sweets. I very seldom qualified, but did so occasionally.

Alice (who until she died recently) kept the shop, reminded me of the “sweet ceremony” when I was talking to her two or three years ago and we had a good laugh at the memory. During the months I was there (about 12) I can remember a mine (live) being washed ashore. – great excitement, and boat with dead sailors in it coming to rest on the beach. It was a hot summer day and they had been dead a long time. I still remember the smell as the poor souls were brought to the level crossing to be taken by special train to Bexhill. After the hot summer came a cold, rough winter. Before the level of the beach was raised, I have seen the fields between the shore and the railway line – not electrified then, flooded and the water frozen. In those days we had to walk from the railway cottage over to the Coast Guard Cottages (private dwellings by then) to get water from the old pump – an arm aching job – then water was put into a filter in the kitchen and filtered through charcoal for drinking water. This was no hardship as Mrs. Stevenson nearly always had a large stone crock of ginger beer (home made) in the kitchen. She was a very good cook and I still remember her crab apple jelly with greedy memory.

We went for milk up to the farm on the hill kept by Alf and Jane Ticehurst. The cows and the milk were clean, warm and altogether lovely.

Their daughter, Marjorie still lives there I believe. I used to envy her, she was a very pretty child and had hair that curled, which, my own being straight, used to make me quite jealous.

Mr and Mrs Stevenson had a daughter, Cicely, just a little older than me. I remember all three with affection and respect, they were very kind to a lonely “townie”. They also had a niece, Poppy Head, she and I were not “sympatico”. I remember her winning a place at a good school in Bexhill and a main line train to Hastings used to stop at the Halt each morning to pick her up as the times of the little motor trains, as they were called, were not convenient – very different from today’s haphazard services. There was also a caddis lamb Janey and I’ve no doubt she finished up as chops, but I never knew her real end.

Then there was the Star Inn with a swing on a tree in the garden and we could swing out over the stream running through. In the bar stood an old Grandfather clock and the superstition was that it had stood in the same place for over 200 years and bad luck would dog anyone who moved it. I know it still stood in the same place in 1928 but I expect someone has dusted behind it by now. The last time I had lunch in there was in the summer of 1928, my son was with us, but (?) hadn’t been born yet. He and I have had many a drink there since. Are the Smiths still there – the younger ones I mean? I remember the marshes for blackberries, mushrooms and plovers eggs. (the plover not a protected species when I was young). I saw my first adder too, and feel I broke an Olympic record for a fast run. I have had many happy holidays at Normans Bay since those childhood days and the old magic still draws me. Maybe I’m wrong but I feel the caravan site down graded the atmosphere of the dear old place and then the final sacrilege of building those ugly houses on the consecrated ground where the old church stood. I feel it should have been preserved as an ancient building and turned into a museum. After all, over 900 years of English history started round about that area. These are some of the folk I remember in my days at the school

– Cicely Stevenson, Dorothy Bean – signal box, Madge Smith – the Star, Marjorie Ticehurst, Alice – shop, Bertie Kimber, “Girlie” Durant, Ernie Elphick, Willie Woods.

This has been typed by Bettina Kulsdom from a photo copy of handwritten notes leant by Daphne Chesson 26th March, 2013 and checked against a typed version by Daphne Chesson.

Early Visitors To Norman's Bay.

In the years following the 1914-18 War John Corker worked as a teacher in Woolwich where he met Charles Hutchinson who was a curate at Holy Trinity Church, Woolwich. Father Hutchinson ran a summer camp for boys from the Arethusa, Exmouth and Warspite training ships at Woolwich and the Shaftsbury Homes, at Norman's Bay and he asked John Corker to come and help. So the Corker family John and Doris and the children Marjorie, Eric and niece Joan all came down to Norman's bay each summer. They were soon joined by the Carroll family Bert and May and their children Eileen, Betty and Howard. Doris and May had worked together in the Telephone Exchange at London Wall before their marriages and knew each other well. Through the long summers the families became very close.

To begin with they stayed up in the village in the Coast guard Cottages where the Elphick and Luffman families lived. Oriel Elphic ran a small school in the old church and occasionally, when the family had gone to the Bay in term time, the children would join her school for a short time. Alice Wrigglesworth ran a shop and her husband Bert ran the taxi service. The Baldwin family ran the other shop in the village and there was great excitement when in 1931 Mr. Baldwin expanded the shop to offer Board Residence and Tea Dances to which the girls eventually went when they were teenagers. The charge for the dances was 1/0d and when parties of more than nine came down from London they got a reduction.

Plots of land had been marked out for sale in the western part of Norman's Bay close to the Martello Tower No 55. At that time there was not much building there except for the Tower and the Army huts leading up to it. No one took up the option on the site marked for a hotel but gradually plots were bought and huts erected. The Answer, The Query, Idano and Whyworry were early ones where the Corkers and the Carrolls stayed but eventually the two families bought three plots, split them into two and Bakuba and Howbeteen were erected and served the two families for many years of happy holidays, Bakuba until 1952 when it had to be removed under the new Town and Country Planning Act, as it was deemed a temporary building and Howbeteen though damaged during the war and had to be rebuilt, until 1975. This was when further building was at last permitted as better services were put in the road and three houses were built as a terrace to replace the hut and the caravan that the Corkers had been using.

By the time the Bakuba and Howbeteen huts were erected the Corker and Carroll children were getting bigger and able to join in the life in the camp. At first this had been up in the village where the permanent caravan site is now, but it later moved to the big field to the West which is now the Camping Club site. Here bell tents were erected and a semi-permanent building put up for the cookhouse and the recreation hut. Father Hutchinson was helped by his young curate from St. John the Evangelist at Waterloo where he became vicar in 1925. Every week there was a new intake of boys to the camp and when they arrived, having walked up from Norman's Bay Halt, a cry would go up "There are smugglers on the beach". Figures would be seen running along the crest of the beach wearing bandanas and eye-patches and the boys would run off to capture them only to find that it was Father Hutchinson and his curates. A great way to break the ice.

Every night there was a campfire with Father Hutchinson telling stories and everyone joining in the sing songs. The Carroll and Corker girls and Doreen Cave were all keen on dancing and acting and eventually formed the Three C's Concert Party and performed to the delight of the boys. A bugle summoned them across the road for the evening's entertainment and at the end of the evening the Last Post was sounded. Services were held in the recreation hut and all attended.

Later, Roy Watts who was involved in social work at St. Catherine's House in Camberwell came down to help and asked a friend Ronnie Martin, who was also at St. Catherine's, Cambridge to join in at the Camp. Ronnie had been head boy at Sevenoaks School and asked old friends from there, Norman Williams and Rolf Trump, to come down to the Bay. Lesley Cave who had also been to Sevenoaks was already having holidays at Norman's Bay with the rest of the Cave family as an uncle owned the Martello Tower. Other helpers would occasionally come and there was excitement when

Charlie Shipman arrived from Chichester driving his fast sports car bought from the proceeds of his father's fish paste and other food factories. When there was time to spare there were swimming parties and expeditions to Bexhill for the Regatta. Relationships developed although eventually the girls were working and could only come down for short holidays. By 1939 Marjorie married Norman Williams, Eileen was engaged to Carol Forder and Betty to Roy Watts. Eileen and Betty were both on the stage, Eileen as one of Mr. Cochrane's Young Ladies and Betty in repertory in Sunderland and Scarborough. Roy who had been in the University Flying Corps was immediately called up in 1939 and stationed at Ford, W. Sussex. He rang Betty to say he had arranged their wedding for the following day. Unfortunately trains were in total chaos and she arrived too late. So it was scheduled for 8.30 the next day. She nearly missed that too, as she overslept, but her mother arrived just in time to wake her, having been driven over from Norman's Bay by Alice's husband – May Carroll protesting that she was giving up a promising career for a very uncertain future. However Roy was not sent abroad instantly and survived the war, though Howard Carroll was killed in a flying accident after the war having survived being shot down over France and helped to return to England by the French underground. Eileen married Carol Forder and eventually both couples lived at Norman's Bay for a few years from 1975.

The war meant that the Bay became a restricted area and soldiers were billeted in the huts and houses along the beach. After the war when families were allowed to return they had to retrieve the contents of their huts which had migrated into the different buildings and had to be sorted out and taken to their rightful places.

So a new generation of Corkers, Carrolls and Watts came down to Norman's Bay for holidays. Howbeteen had to be rebuilt and Bakuba replaced after 1952 by an occasional caravan. Eventually, the new services in the road were available, planning permission was given and the three houses in a small terrace – Sovereign House, Middlings (now Heaven) and Howbeteen (now Angel's Haven) were built. But sadly there were very few more of the boys camps. Father Hutch had moved from Waterloo to work abroad in 1943, returning to Brighton in 1953, when the land at Norman's Bay became available the concept of such boys camps were outdated.

Susan Corker.



Norman Williams and Doreen Cave (?)



Eileen Carrol, Marjorie Corker, Elizabeth Carrol, Joan Reeves



Marjorie Corker



Eileen Carrol, Elizabeth Carrol, Joan Reeves, Marjorie Williams, Norman Williams, Bob Holden



Marjorie Corker
and Norman Williams

Marjorie Corker with sheep dog
bought from the Baldwins at Sunshine Café



Editor's note: A small selection of the stories which must be legion among the residents of this village which has grown from the Sluice of the fifteenth century.

Mystery of the Marshes

On Friday, January 1st, 1915, a story appeared in the Sussex Express, Surrey Standard and Kent Mail, concerning a resident of 10 Coastguard Cottages. An inquest had been held at The Star Inn, Pevensey Sluice, on the body of Sergeant Major Dugdale, aged 45, who had drowned near there. He had wired his wife on Christmas Eve that he had 48 hours leave from his post with the Royal Field Artillery in Worthing and would be home that evening.

He was given a ride to the Star Inn by John Bambridge where, waking up the landlord, they both had whiskies and then Dugdale set out across the marsh to his home in the Coastguard Cottages. It was foggy and slippery and he never arrived home. His body was found in the sluice on Monday, 28th December.

Evidence showed that he was a good swimmer, was sober, jolly and very familiar with the route across the marsh. His cap and stick were found on the bank beside the sluice and there were no signs of him slipping.

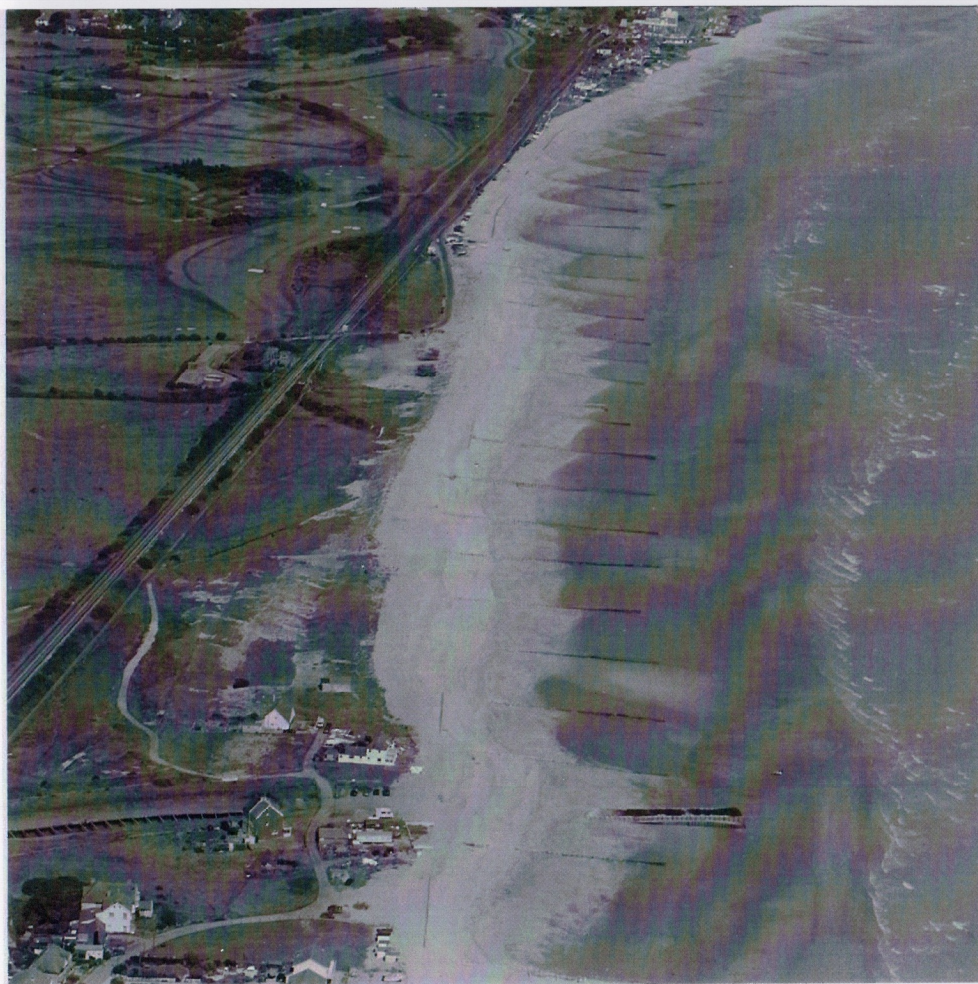
The jury found an open verdict. He left a widow and eleven children.

The full story can be found in the above newspaper archives with the evidence given by the innkeeper, John Bambridge, the policeman who dragged the sluice and found the body and the doctor who attended after the body was found.

The census of 1911 shows the names of the whole family who were born variously in Lancashire, Hampshire, Bristol, Colchester, Donegal and Sussex.

Just one of the stories from this sleepy village by the sea.

Photographs from the archives







NORMANS BAY

1968

2890 LOCK Minnie L. Pevensey Sluice
2891 LOCK Reginald A. Pevensey Sluice

2892 DOSWELL Edward A., Gate House - J
2893 DOSWELL Derek J., Gate House
2894 DOSWELL Clara L., Gate House

2895 MITCHELL George W., 1 Railway Cots.-J
2896 MITCHELL Mona M. 1, Railway Cots.
2897 MURRAY Florence 1 Railway Cots.
2898 DOSWELL George E., 2 Railway Cots. - J
2899 DOSWELL Isabella, 2 Railway Cots.
2900 DOSWELL Janet 2 Railway Cots.

2901 BANKS Frederick J., Rackhouse Bank
2902 BANKS Marjorie, Rackhouse Bank

2903 POFFLEY Harold C. Star Inn
2904 POFFLEY Joan Star Inn

2905 HALES Doris F., 1 Commissioners Cots.
2906 HALES Reginald, 1 Commissioners Cots.
2907 ROBY Mary, 2 Commissioners Cots.
2908 ROBY Sam, 2 Commissioners Cots.

2909 BALDWIN Phyllis, Sunshine - J
2910 SLINGSBY Gladys H., Sunshine
2911 PEARSON Lawrence W., Sunshine
2912 PEARSON Doris I., Sunshine

2913 DOSWELL Derrick E., 2 Sea View Cots.
2914 DOSWELL Violet E., 2 Sea View Cots.
2915 WARREN Derrick H. W., 3 Sea View Cots.

2916 SMITH Ellen F., Beach Crest
2917 SMITH James C. C., Beach Crest
2918 SMITH Ronald J. Beach Crest

2919 SMITH Hephzibah Meadow View
2920 SMITH Charles T. Meadow View

COASTGUARD COTTAGES

2921 WEIR Robert C. 3
2922 WEIR Janet 3
2923 CLARK Frederick 5
2924 CLARK Lillian C. 5
2925 ELPHICK Annie 6
2926 ELTHICK Christopher 6
2927 HUSSON Charles E. - J 8
2928 HUSSON Ellen R. 8
2929 PAICE Ian R. 9
2930 PAICE Ann F. 9

2931 CHESSON Hilda D. Down Beach
2932 CHESSON Norman L. V., Down Beach - J
2933 GOODEN Amy E., Resthaven
2934 McDONNELL Edward G. - J Normandy
2935 McDONNELL Lily M. Normandy

2936 SUMMERS Daisy, Tower House
2937 SUMMERS Joseph G. A., Tower House - J
2938 AKEHURST Alice, The Cottage - J
2939 AKEHURST Frederick G., The Cottage
2940 BUTLER George, The Cottage
2941 BUTLER Mary A., The Cottage

2942 HOAD Ernest R., The White House
2943 HOAD Kathleen M., The White House
2944 HOTCHIN Dorothy K., Unadaro
2945 ROGERS Edgar V., The Green Bungalow
2946 ROGERS Nellie, The Green Bungalow
2947 GOSS Eric W., The Signals
2948 GOSS Joyce E., The Signals
2949 LKELSEY William Lorelei
2950 LKELSEY Gladys Lorelei
2951 HOAD Kathleen - J Allees
2952 SUBBA-ROW Doris Allees

Normans Bay 1968











CAMPING SITE NORMAN'S BAY SUSSEX

C 2488X



The Village Barbecue August 1985





Seaview cottages before Alice's shop







THE CARAVANS, NORMANS BAY







A detailed historical map of the Hastings Rape, showing the coastline, major towns, and surrounding regions. The map is titled "HASTINGS RAPE" in large, bold letters. It includes numerous place names such as Hastings, Winchelsea, Rye, and Pevensey. The map also shows the English Channel to the west and the North Sea to the east. A scale bar at the bottom right indicates distances in miles, ranging from 0 to 10. The map is dated "Anno Domini 1676".

To free page 22



It was quite obvious to Duncan, Bromley and Lefty that Helen was taunting Jane with some secret knowledge. Bromley (John Horsley), Helen (Dionne Foster), Jane, Duncan, Lefty



FROM BRITAIN: Derek Bond and Jane Hylton in "Quiet Woman." Don't we overdo this dreamy character stuff?

"THE QUIET WOMAN"

2508. 6.384. Pers. CRYST. "II." REFRACT: NOT FIRM.
 DIRECTOR: John Gilling. LEADING PLAYERS: Doris Bond, Jan-
 Recording Systems: RFA. Hutton

[illegible]

"The Quiet Woman" is the name of a pit down Winchester way, where before pleasant backgrounds of harbor and beach is enacted an intriguing still-life of romance and adventure. It is soon apparent that Jane, the newcomer of "The Quiet Woman," has some secret which she shares with Miss, her barmaid, but which she would keep from Duncann, the handsome young police





Many more photographs are in the possession of families around the village and some have created beautiful albums, but I have selected some of the old ones which appealed to me.

Finally...

I have enjoyed researching this project and would like to thank all those who have assisted in producing this small booklet.

John Scarboro joined me in the initial plan and we had several meetings, including a visit to the Bexhill Museum.

Daphne Chesson gave us access to her carefully collected newspaper cuttings and documents for which I am very grateful.

Sarah McLaughlan provided her collection of documents which she had collected for a school project from the Pevensey Bay Library.

Bexhill Museum Library staff were very helpful in assisting me to search through their archive material from which I learned far more than I could produce in this booklet. I highly recommend a visit to the museum to any reader who would like to know more about Northeye and the Sluice.

But in the end I had to draw it all to a close. Much is missing ... the evacuation of the village during the second world war, the development of the Normans Bay Caravan Park and the history of its family firm, memories from those still living here who were born in the village – but, like Topsy it spread and became too big for me to cope with.

I hope you enjoy what we have begun.

Bettina Kulsdom
April, 2015.

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